

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 865d.01/113 FOR Des. #1723

FROM Italy (Kirk) DATED June 5, 1936
TO NAME 1-1127 ...

REGARDING: **Respect for the traditional religious communities in
Italian East Africa is noted in the organization
and administration of the territory.**

ge

865D.404 / 1

865d.404

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 865d.01/132 FOR despatch #1743

FROM Italy (Kirk) DATED June 17, 1936
TO NAME 1-1127 ...

REGARDING: Laws on the organization and administration of Ethiopia:
Administration of Religion in Italian East Africa.

865D.404/2

2

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DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 865d.01/142 FOR Despatch #1756

FROM Italy (Kirk) DATED June 26, 1936
TO NAME 1-1127 ...

REGARDING: Religion- Italian East Africa. A number of Italian nuns are reported to have recently arrived in Ethiopia to replace nuns of other nationalities.

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 865d.01/1797 FOR Despatch #1797

FROM Italy (Kirk) DATED July 22, 1936.

TO

NAME

1-1127

...

REGARDING: Pax Romana and the Italian policy of religious toleration in Ethiopia. Marshal Graziani's efforts to ingratiate the Italian regime with the large Mussulman sections of the population of the former Ethiopian Empire.

wth

865D.404/4

4

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 865d.01/157 FOR Despatch #1797

FROM Italy (Kirk) DATED July 22, 1936.
TO NAME 1-1127 ...

REGARDING: Organization of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in Ethiopia. Pope has appointed a special commission composed of cardinals and other high prelates, under the supervision of the Sacred Congregation, to study- Missionaries will be chosen from the Italian religious orders.

865D.404/5

by

865d.404

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 865d.01/166 FOR #1863

FROM Italy (Tittmann) DATED Sept. 2, 1936.
TO NAME 1-1127 ...

REGARDING: Italian administration and development of Ethiopia.
Religions. Catholic, Coptic and Hebrew. Italian plans
and subsidies for all -

865D.404/6

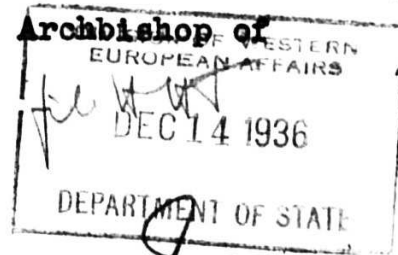


LEGATION OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Addis Ababa, October 15, 1936.

3901

No. 193

Subject: Arrival of Mgr. Castellani, Archbishop of Rhodes.



CONFIDENTIAL

RECEIVED
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

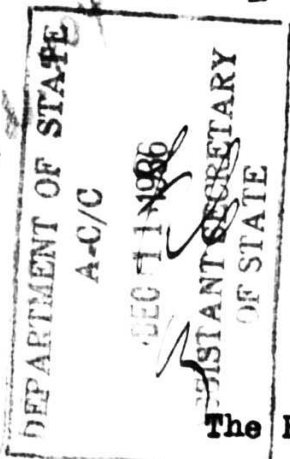
1936 DEC 8 PM 12 57

DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS
AND RECORDS

To the Field
In U. S. A

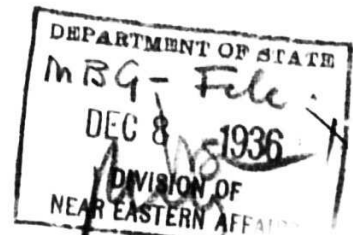
Copy to Embassy Rome

865D.404/7



The Honorable

The Secretary of State,
Washington.



Sir:

I have the honor to report that on October 13, 1936, there arrived in Addis Ababa Monsignor Gian Maria Emilio Castellani, Archbishop of Rhodes, in the capacity of Apostolic Visitant for Ethiopia on special mission.

The arrival of this emissary of the Pope is connected with the organization of the activities of the Roman Catholic Church in the new "Empire". Already several months ago it became known here that the Pope had appointed a committee,

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GT

- 2 -

committee, consisting of a number of cardinals and other church dignitaries, to study the problems presented by the conquest and "annexation" of Ethiopia. Two phases of the situation are understood to have received special attention, viz. (a) the ministering to the spiritual needs of the present and future Italian population in East Africa, and (b) the continuation and extension of missionary activities among the natives.

With respect to the white settlers it may be assumed that the system of ecclesiastic hierarchies in vogue in Italy will, as far as practicable, be instituted in Ethiopia. At present there are three Apostolic Vicariates and two Apostolic Prefectures in Ethiopia. The Vicars are titular bishops acting as delegates of the Apostolic See, while the Prefects are priests with similar powers but without episcopal rank. All are under the supervision of the "Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide" in Rome, which is said to be organized as a sort of "Colonial Office" to the Vatican.

I understand that in future all of Italian East Africa will be divided into about a dozen vicariates and prefectures, and that the Abyssinian hinterland which hitherto went with the prefecture of Djibouti will be attached to the nearest prefecture in Ethiopia.

Missionary work is to be carried out chiefly by the religious orders of the Salesians and Capuchins, both of whom have in the past been active in this part of the world. The French Lazarists who have been working in Ethiopia for nearly a century will probably not be permitted to continue. The religious orders are to be assisted by an organization called "Italica Gens" which will interest itself chiefly in the construction of hospitals and schools.

It

. - 3 -

It seems certain that in their vision of an Italo-African empire the Church and State in Italy will find it convenient to march side by side. Having made his peace with the Pope the Duce - following the example of France - will be quick to seize every opportunity to use the Church for the strengthening of Italian political influence abroad. From personal observation I know that in Egypt and Palestine, for example, the Italian Government has during the past few years made great efforts to impress the Near East with this alleged powerful partnership between the Latin Church and Fascist Italy. And after the serious setbacks the Roman Catholic Church has recently suffered in Spain and Malta it may be assumed that it will eagerly welcome a chance for expansion elsewhere. As a significant indication of the spirit animating the collaboration between the spiritual and secular powers in Ethiopia the following utterance by Mgr. Castellani may be quoted:

"Italy is the country God has designated to bring to the world an ever higher civilization which will also redound to the glory of the Church. That is why God is always on our side, for he knows that Italy is worthy of assuming such a lofty mission. It will be the Empire of Rome that will carry the Cross of the Christ thanks to the stupendous work of the man with that wonderful personality - the Duce."

It is as yet too early to speculate upon the effect the preponderant position of the Roman Catholic Church in Ethiopia will have upon American and other Protestant missionary activities. Although Marshal Graziani told a British missionary last June that inasmuch as Italy had proclaimed religious liberty his work could go on, there have been many indications that the Italian authorities

are not

- 4 -

are not very friendly disposed towards them. It seems likely that the general attitude of the Roman Church in other parts of the Near East, as well as in the Far East, will also obtain here, namely a spirit of opposition to American and British missionary endeavors not only on the ground that they are heretical, but for political reasons because they are known to have successfully spread Anglo-Saxon culture and the use of the English language.


Respectfully yours,


C. Van H. Engert
Minister Resident

File No. 840.4

CVHE/rlh

Copy for Embassy, Rome.

5 Carbon copies
Received 

8
DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 765.84/5137 FOR Telegram #683, 4 pm.

FROM Ethiopia (Egert) DATED December 16, 1936.
TO NAME 1-1127 o p o

REGARDING: Marshal Grazianni's speech at the Mohammedan Bairam Feast.
Said that all religions are free in Ethiopia but that the
Moslems are the right hand of the government.

wth

865D.404/8

WE KFC

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JS

Gray

ADDIS ABABA

Dated December 16, 1936

Rec'd 11:59 p.m.

Secretary of State,

Washington, D.C.

683, December 16, 4 p.m.

On the occasion of the Mohammedan Bairam feast yesterday the Marshal made a speech in which after referring to the occupation "of the furthestmost parts of the empire" he said "this proves that God is on the side of Italy because Italy represents justice, liberty, progress and work. All religions are free in Ethiopia but the Moslems are the right hand of the government."

See also the Legation's despatch No. 167, August 14th.

ENGERT

JS

note
8650.406

765.84/5137

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 365d.1163/33 FOR #209

FROM Ethiopia (Engert) DATED Nov. 21, 1936
TO NAME 1-1127 o p o

REGARDING: Italian attitude towards Missionary activities in Ethiopia.
Questionnaire recently submitted to Italian authorities
regarding-

mb

865D.404/9

GH

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DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 365d.1163/66 FOR tel #159 7pm

FROM Italy (Phillips) DATED Apr.14, 1937
TO NAME 1-1127 676

REGARDING: Religion in Italian East Africa

Italian Government has adopted a
policy of no discrimination
against missions or against
religions. Protestant missions
and missionaries welcome in Ethiopia
provided they refrain from political
propaganda or any anti-Italian attitude.

dg

865D.404/10

GM/2

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RB

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (A)

Rome

Dated April 14, 1937

Rec'd 4:09 p. m.

Secretary of State

Washington.

159, April 14, 7 p. m.

This afternoon I gave Count Ciano the substance of your telegram No. 54, April 10, 4 p. m. and asked him whether he could now furnish me with a full report in regard to the expulsion of the three members of the American Bible Missionary Society. I emphasized that if they had not already left Ethiopia they should be given ample time to settle their affairs. In my presence Ciano called the Minister of the Colonies on the telephone and asked whether he had as yet received any detailed report from Addis Ababa. From the conversation it was apparent that nothing further had yet been received but the Minister of the Colonies assured Ciano that he would send a despatch this evening to the Viceroy requesting that the report be forwarded immediately and also requiring him to give ample time to the three missionaries concerned in the event that they had not already left.

Ciano then resumed his conversation with me and referred to the

46

RB

-2-#159, April 14, 7 p. m. from
Rome

4659.404
to the future of missions in Ethiopia. He said that he could now assure me that the Italian Government had adopted a policy of no discrimination against missions or against religions, that Protestant missions and Protestant missionaries were welcome in Ethiopia provided they refrained from political propaganda or any anti-Italian attitude. The expulsion orders therefore were against persons for individual activities and were not directed against the operation of the missions themselves.

Inasmuch as the representatives of the American press here have been pressing for information, I have with Ciano's approval informed them briefly of the above.

Ciano also inferred that new missionaries to replace those who had left would be welcome.

PHILLIPS

SMS

RGC

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 365d.1163/82 FOR Tel. #272, 11 a.m.

FROM Italy (Phillips) DATED June 11, 1937
TO NAME 1-1127 gpo

REGARDING: New Italian policy adopted against all foreign missions
and Missionaries in Ethiopia which will require the
withdrawal of all missionaries and missions includ-
ing American.

mb

865D.404/10

JLS

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (B)

ROME

Dated June 11, 1937

Rec'd. 9:20 a. m.

Secretary of State,

Washington, D. C.

272, June 11, 11 a. m.

My 159, April 14, 7 p. m.

*note
865d.404*

I was told day before yesterday by the British Ambassador that Count Ciano had just informed him that a new policy had been adopted against all foreign missions and missionaries in Ethiopia. This policy would require the withdrawal of all missionaries and missions including American. Official added that the Italian decision would become public on Monday next as the result of a question and answer in the House of Commons.

I immediately sought an interview with Ciano who received me yesterday afternoon and confirmed the above information. The missionaries are to leave and the mission property is to be appraised and the Societies indemnified.

I remonstrated strongly against this decision saying that in my opinion it would be very badly received throughout the United States inasmuch as the work of American missions abroad was widely and generously supported in all communities. It seemed a pity, I added, that just at a time when so many international difficulties and problems required adjustment the Italian Government should adopt a course which would

antagonize

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JLS -2- #272, June 11, 11 a. m. from ROME

antagonize at once so many people and be open to so many unfavorable constructions.

CONFIDENTIAL. Ciano replied that he himself had done everything he could to avoid this step which, however, had been taken by the Duce himself acting with all the pros and cons before him. He said it was the Duce's desire that teaching by foreigners in Ethiopia should cease.

PHILLIPS

KLP CSB

46 5d.404

11

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 365d.1163/83 FOR tel #272 11am

FROM Italy (Phillips) DATED June 13, 1937
TO NAME 1-1127 GPO

REGARDING: Religion - Ethiopia

Decision of the Italian Government
that educational work of the foreign
Missionaries in Ethiopia must cease,
missionaries be withdrawn and mission
properties taken over ty Italian
Government.

dg

865D.404/11

WE
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JR

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (A)

Rome

Dated June 13, 1937

Rec'd 7:59 a.m.

Secretary of State,

Washington.

274, June 13, 11 a.m.

CONFIDENTIAL.

My 272, June 11, 11 a.m.

3659.0003
4659414
The British Ambassador has just received a written communication from Count Ciano confirming the decision that the educational work of the foreign missionaries in Ethiopia must cease, that the missionaries would be withdrawn and the mission properties taken over by the Italian Government. The letter continued that in so far as the purely humanitarian and social work of the missionaries was concerned this phase might again be considered after recognition of the Empire.

It is understood that the new order will apply to all foreign units including American, British, Swedish and a small French Catholic mission.

PHILLIPS

KLP

23

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 865d.01/290 FOR Despatch #383

FROM Italy (Phillips) DATED May 28, 1937
TO NAME 1-1127 ***

REGARDING: Religion- Italian East Africa. Discussion of the suspicious attitude of former Ethiopian regime toward the Catholic missions

The suspicious attitude of the former Ethiopian regime toward Catholic missions is well known. And the Senate is fully aware that, despite this attitude and amidst difficulties and sufferings of every kind, Italian missionaries for many decades had carried on a truly apostolic and highly Italian work in Ethiopia.

There is no question that today we must take steps to give our missions just satisfaction, calling upon them to cooperate with their schools and hospitals in our action of civilization. This has been done; and there is imminent the conclusion of an agreement with the Holy See regulating the entire question of religious districts in Ethiopia in connection with missionary work.

865D.404/12

GMC

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DIVISION OF ~~EASTERN~~ EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

MEMORANDUM

JPM

July 28, 1937

The Pope several months ago addressed "brevets" to "His Majesty Victor Emmanuel III, August King of Italy and Emperor of Ethiopia;" and to "Our Dearest Daughter in Christ, Elena, August Queen of Italy and Empress of Ethiopia". The Italians have chosen to consider that this act constitutes recognition of the Empire by the Vatican.

The reorganization of the jurisdictions of the Roman Catholic Church in Ethiopia, as indicated in this despatch, in order that they may coincide with the political divisions established by the Italian authorities would seem to constitute an act of de facto recognition.

Eu:HHT:LF





THE FOREIGN SERVICE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AMERICAN EMBASSY
ROME, July 8, 1937.

No. 470

Subject: New Organization of the Catholic Church in Ethiopia.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

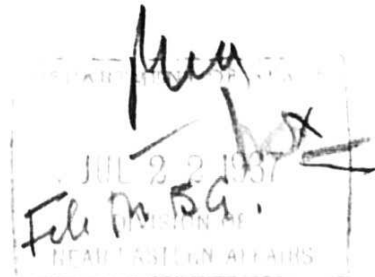
1937 JUL 21 AM 11 36

DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS
AND RECORDS

To the Field
In U. S. A.

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,
Washington.



Sir:

I have the honor to inform the Department that the OSSERVATORE ROMANO, the official organ of the Vatican, on July 7th published the following decrees regarding the reorganization of the Catholic Church in Ethiopia:

"The New Ecclesiastical Organization of Ethiopia."

As a result of political changes which have taken place in Ethiopia, the Holy See hastened to study an ecclesiastical reorganization of that territory, which should take into account both the new exigencies of religious assistance for Catholics of the Latin Rite and of the Alexandrine-Ethiopian Rite, and the greatest possibilities of peacefully intensifying missionary work. There was therefore appointed a Pontifical

Commission ...

865D.404/13

111 2 2 1937

Commission to examine all aspects of the religious problem, and, on the basis of its conclusions approved by the Holy Father Pius XI, and in view of the recent civil territorial organization of Ethiopia, the Sacred Congregation for the Eastern Church and the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda have proceeded to issue the decrees set forth below, which are dated March 25, 1937, regarding their respective territorial jurisdictions. As has been already announced, the Holy See also wished to establish a new Apostolic Delegation for Ethiopia, which has been confided to His Excellency the Most Reverend Mgr. Giovanni Maria Castellani, O.F.M., Titular Archbishop of Perge, translated from the episcopal residential seat at Rhodes and already Apostolic Visitor for Ethiopia.

"Decrees of the Sacred Congregation for the Eastern Church."

By Decrees dated March 25, 1937, the Sacred Congregation for the Eastern Church has provided for:

- (1) the suppression of the Apostolic Vicariate of Abyssinia;
- (2) the establishment of the Apostolic Prefecture of Tigray, entrusted to the Italian Provinces of the Congregation of Missions;
- (3) the establishment of the Apostolic Prefecture of Gondar, entrusted to the Sons of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Verona);
- (4) the establishment of the Apostolic Prefecture of Dessié, entrusted to the Order of Minor Friars;
- (5) the incorporation of the territory of Danalia in the Apostolic Vicariate of Eritrea.

"Decrees ...

"Decrees of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda.

By Decrees dated March 25, 1937, the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide has provided for:

(1) the modification of the boundaries of the Apostolic Vicariate of Galla (reduced to the territory of the civil Government of Harrar), and the change of its name to that of Harrar (Italian East Africa);

(2) the modification of the boundaries of the Apostolic Vicariate of Mogadiscio (extended to the whole territory of the civil Government of Italian Somalia);

(3) the modification of the boundaries of the Apostolic Prefecture of Djibouti (reduced to the territory of French Somaliland);

(4) the establishment of the Apostolic Prefecture of Neghelli (corresponding to the civil commissariats of Borana and Sidamo in the civil Government of Galla and Sidamo), detached from the former Vicariate of Galla (now of Harrar) and entrusted to the Pontifical Institutes of Saints Peter and Paul and Saints Ambrose and Charles for Foreign Missions (Milan);

(5) the elevation of the Apostolic Prefecture of Kaffa to an Apostolic Vicariate and the change of its name to that of Gimma (part of the Government of Galla and Sidamo);

(6) the appointment of Mgr. Luigi Santa, now Apostolic Prefect of Kaffa, as Apostolic Vicar of the new Vicariate of Gimma;

(7) the establishment of the Apostolic Vicariate of Addis Ababa, detached from the territory of the former Vicariate of Galla (now of Harrar) and entrusted to the Secular Clergy;

(8) Appointment of His Excellency the Most Reverend

Mgr. ...

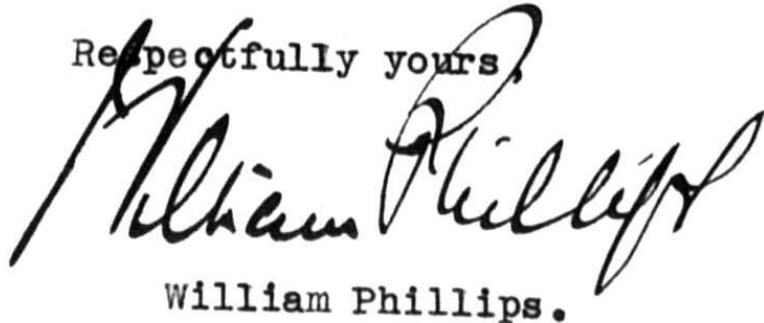
Mgr. Giovanni Maria Castellani, Archbishop of Rhodes, as Apostolic Vicar of the new Vicariate of Addis Ababa.

The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda has also, by Decree dated May 21, 1937, appointed as Apostolic Prefect of Neghelli the Reverend Father Gabriele Arosio, of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions of Milan."

From the biographies given, all the ecclesiastics appointed appear to be Italians.

The principal Italian newspapers have reprinted the foregoing decrees without comment.

Respectfully yours,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'William Phillips'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'W'.

William Phillips.



LEGATION OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Bulkeley, Ramleh, July 21, 1937.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
A-M/C
RECEIVED
AUG 26 1937
ASSISTANT SECRETARY
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
1937 AUG 19 PM 1 18 OF STATE

No. 1025.

Subject: Visit to Egypt of the Coptic Archbishop of
Ethiopia.

DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS
AND RECORDS

DIVISION OF
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
AUG 27 1937
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
AUG 28 1937
DIVISION OF
NEAR EASTERN AFFAIRS

865D.404/14

FOR DISTRIBUTION - ONLY		Yes	No
To the Field			
In U. S. A.			

865d.404

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to inform the Department that considerable interest is being aroused in Egypt by the present visit of the Coptic Archbishop of Ethiopia, Abuna Kyrillos. The Archbishop arrived in Egypt on July 14 from Rome, where he had been the guest of the Italian Government for several days.

When it was announced in Egypt, several weeks ago, that the Coptic Archbishop of Ethiopia intended to visit Rome, it

was

AUG 28 1937

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was generally believed that this visit would mean that the Coptic Church in Ethiopia, which has been under the authority of the Coptic Patriarch in Cairo for many centuries, would become independent. When the Archbishop of Ethiopia arrived in Alexandria, he was immediately interviewed by newspaper reporters on the subject of the establishment of an independent church in his domain. He replied categorically that there was no question of such establishment, that it was not discussed by him in Rome, and that he intended immediately to proceed to Cairo to pay his respects to his superior and Patriarch. This statement has been received with relief by the Copts of Egypt, but the belief is still prevalent that an independent Coptic Church in Ethiopia may be established in the not distant future.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bert Fish". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Bert Fish

In triplicate
File No. 840.4
GVA.alw

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 365d.1163/103 FOR #587

FROM Italy (Reed) DATED Sept.28, 1937
TO NAME 1-1127 ope

REGARDING:

Attitude of the Vatican toward Protestant missionaries in Ethiopia.

Summaries of articles in the CIVILTA CATTOLICA concerning Protestant activities in Ethiopia, etc.

865D.404/15 15



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ROME, December 22, 1937.

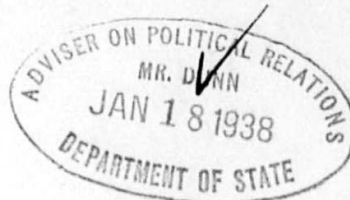
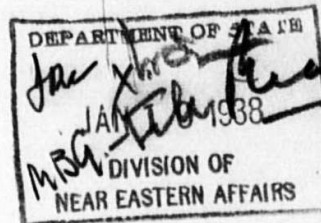
No. 718

Subject: Ethiopia - Church Matters.

RECEIVED
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

1938 JAN 10 AM 11 40

DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS
AND RECORDS



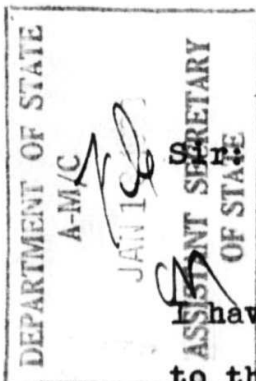
FOR DISTRIBUTION - MR. K. To the Field
12 U. S. A.
Copy to Legation, Cairo
+ to Consulate, Aden, MRG.

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Copy to
Commercial Office (A-M/O)
To

Cairo
Aden
13 11 19 38



With reference to my despatch No. 470 of July 8, 1937, I have the honor to inform the Department that according to the Italian press, Marshal Graziani, then Viceroy of Ethiopia, received on December 1, 1937, the Coptic clergy in Addis Ababa and at that time ratified the appointments made by the Church Council of Ethiopia. A new Metropolitan was appointed (the Metropolitan having hitherto been appointed by the Egyptian Patriarch), as well as some new Bishops. The importance of this act, whereby the Ethiopian Church becomes independent of foreign influence, is noted both in Italian press despatches and comment. The MESSAGGERO, for example, remarks that while historically the appointment of a Metropolitan of foreign nationality was justified in a certain...

865D.404/16

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FEB - 8 1938

certain sense and even providential "since the religious policy of the Negus regime was contrary to the religious interests of the population", with the advent of the Italian government, this continued subjection of the Church in Ethiopia to Egyptian control is entirely unjustified. The Ethiopian Church now becomes autonomous as regards the Egyptian Church. This change, the MESSAGGERO adds, in no way means that on Italy's part there is the slightest intention of disturbing religious ties between the two Churches and in fact "we expect from the Patriarch of Alexandria an attitude in keeping with the needs of the moment, since the question, as the Ethiopian prelates themselves see it, should be confined to the subject of ecclesiastical hierarchy. This also serves as a denial of tendentious rumors, echoed in certain foreign newspapers, that the movement of the Ethiopian clergy for an independent Church in some way influenced the Government's determination and paved the way for a change in the dogmatic organization of the Ethiopian Christian Church."

During the ceremony above mentioned, Graziani is reported to have expressed the opinion that this change, which marked a historic event in the history of the Ethiopian Church and the Empire, was in the interest of the faithful and that the Government was pleased with the clergy's decision. The choice of Abuna Abraham (Bishop of Gondar) was a sound one, Graziani believed, because of his well-known devotion to faith and rectitude. "Last week," Graziani continued, "I visited the ancient, austere convent of Bizen, where I had the pleasure of paying my respects to the venerable Prior who, as an old

and ...

and faithful friend of Italy, enjoys our esteem and that of all the real friends of our country. Let that esteem serve as an example for all. As I have done in the Holy places I have visited, I now invite you, too, to pray earnestly to God for continued protection of our work of goodness and justice for the populations of the Empire and for the rapid progress of Ethiopia, under Italy's guidance, toward the prosperity which her soil so abundantly promises.

"The day is now close at hand when I shall leave these regions, to which my heart is so deeply attached. I hope that the memory of my work, ever inspired upon justice, whether in indulgence or severity, may always be upright and serene, as the memory I shall keep of this land which I have loved will be serene and affectionate. There will soon come to succeed me a Prince of the House of Savoy. So great and so numerous are the outstanding qualities of this Prince that the moment you see him you will realize that he is indeed the man designed and sent by God to guide Ethiopia to better fortunes. Follow him throughout, appreciate and love him in your interest, the interest of your country and of your children."

The newly elected Abuna, who is stated in certain Italian newspaper articles to have been rendered blind by Italian poison gas during the late Abyssinian conflict, is reported to have replied that Ethiopia "has at last today received, through your words, the brightest and most beautiful light . . . revealing goodness and truth. The whole people is today spiritually rallied around your beloved person, praying to the Lord for the health, power, and glory of the King-Emperor, the unconquered and unconquerable Duce, the wise and beloved Viceroy. We today, thanks to you, feel ...

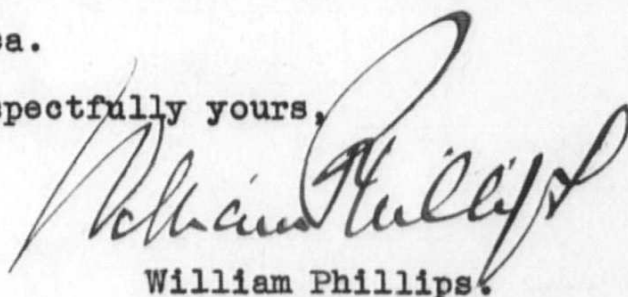
feel ourselves not only blessed by fortune and proud of the victory achieved but also feel ourselves better than our fathers who, despite their noble struggles and generous sacrifices, did not have the good fortune of knowing the satisfaction, joy and pride which we know today. May God increase the strength and glory of Italy, teacher of every virtue, kindness and justice."

The press also publishes today messages to Mussolini sent by the Moslem students of Ethiopia and Libya in the El Azhar University of Cairo, expressing their gratification with his assumption of the colonial portfolio and with the appointment of the Duke of Aosta as Viceroy of Ethiopia, as well as their gratitude and loyalty to Italy.

The importance of this appointment of a new and independent Coptic Metropolitan is emphasized by recent reports, largely ignored by the Italian press, of its repercussions in Egypt. The STAMPA is the only newspaper read by the Embassy that has referred to the question, and this paper merely reported from Alexandria on December 20th that the press in Egypt had published the Italian reply to the protests of the Egyptian Coptic Church. The Egyptian Metropolitan, Makram, has, according to the Egyptian report referred to, declared the Italian reply to be unsatisfactory.

The question, although on the surface of doubtful importance, may have far-reaching consequences in the Near East. It is not likely to contribute to the betterment of Italo-Egyptian relations and may conceivably provoke dissension in Italian East Africa.

Respectfully yours,


William Phillips.

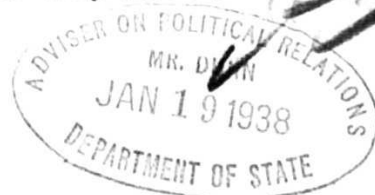


LEGATION OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Cairo, December 16, 1937.

No. 1150.

Subject: Establishment of an Autocephalous Church
in Ethiopia.



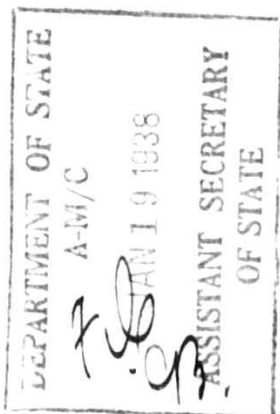
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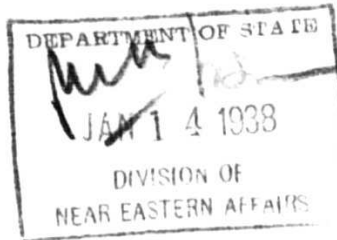
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The Honorable

The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to inform the Department that Egypt, its Coptic circles in particular, was both stirred and surprised by recent news despatches to the effect that an archbishop and six new bishops were elected by their fellow-clergymen in Ethiopia and have been there ordained. According to the first reports, the elections were approved by the Viceroy, Marshal Graziani, who, together

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with the principal religious and civil authorities of the country, was present at the attendant ceremonies.

Subsequent despatches gave a more serious turn to the affair, indicating that what had been done was nothing less than the establishment of a separate and wholly independent Coptic Patriarchate in Ethiopia. In a conversation which the Secretary of the Legation had with the Secretary General of the Foreign Office on December 16, the latter confirmed that the later and more serious version is the true one.

In the past, the head of the Ethiopian Church has been an archbishop appointed by the Patriarch in Egypt. The foundation of a Patriarchate in Ethiopia amounts, therefore, so far as Ethiopia is concerned, to the formation of an autocephalous church.

The new Ethiopian Patriarch Abraham is one of five Ethiopian bishops who were ordained some years ago. He is seventy-five years of age and was blinded by gas in the late struggle. Two of the other bishops have disappeared since the invasion, another was condemned to death by the Italians, and the fifth died of natural causes.

The elevation of Abouna Abraham as Patriarch means that Abouna Kyrillos, the archbishop who had been regularly appointed by the Egyptian Patriarchate, has been passed over and, in practical effect, deposed. The latter went to Italy last summer and conferred with Mussolini concerning religious matters in Ethiopia. Upon leaving Rome, Abouna Kyrillos traveled to Egypt

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and has remained here ever since. It appears that when his presence was desired in Ethiopia by the Italian authorities, he replied that he preferred to wait until a reply was received from Rome and the situation became settled.

The Egyptian Patriarchate has displayed a document to the press in which Abouna Abraham, together with two other bishops, formally undertook under penalty of excommunication to give his wholehearted support to the archbishop appointed by Cairo, not to revolt against his authority, and not to elect a new head or take part in any action tending to weaken the prestige or the authority of the Patriarchate.

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It would appear that Italy, in breaking the ancient ties which united the component parts of the Coptic Church has brought to a swift and sudden conclusion a process -- the progressive nationalization of the Coptic Church in Ethiopia -- which was begun by Haile Selassie himself, and which, in the ordinary way, might have been expected to be completed some generations hence. Until the reign of Haile Selassie, up to and including the reign of the Empress Zaoditu, the Ethiopian sovereigns took no action in the international field without first consulting the Patriarchate in Egypt. Haile Selassie broke this tradition by forming a "chegi", or kind of governmental religious council.

In taking the step which has been described, Italy

doubtless

doubtless desires to enlist the services of the Church in reducing the people of Ethiopia to submission, order and quiet. The desired instrument has doubtless been found in the old, blind Father Abraham. When it is remembered that the Vatican gave no sign of disapproval when Italy invaded Ethiopia, it is possible to regard the action that has been taken as a step which may lead to the introduction on a considerable scale of Roman Catholic influence in Ethiopia. Indeed, it has already been rumored in the local press that Italy intends to attach the Coptic Church of Abyssinia to the Church of Rome, and that the new Patriarch in Addis Ababa will soon travel to Rome to be consecrated.

It is obvious, from the diplomatic activity which has taken place, that the Egyptian Government takes a serious view of the matter. Immediately upon the publication of the newspaper despatches to which reference has been made, the Egyptian representative at Addis Ababa (who happens to be an archivist) was instructed to report. The Italian Charge d'Affaires in Cairo was asked for information which he was at first unable to give, and the Egyptian Minister at Rome was requested to ask the Italian Foreign Office for information. When the telegram reporting his interview was received, he was instructed to ask for additional information. In Cairo, there have been frequent comings and goings with regard to the affair involving the Italian Legation, the Foreign Office, and the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

The exact story of what is going on is closely held

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at the present time. An answer to the question asked in Parliament on December 13 regarding the matter has been deferred for two weeks. In rough outline, however, it would appear that Italy contends that the matter is a religious question. Egypt holds that it is that, and more. The Government had felt some irritation over the fact that the Italian authorities recently closed the Moslem school at Diredawa, expelling the two teachers who had been sent by the Egyptian Ministry of Education, and owing to the refusal to permit Al Azhar University to send representatives to preach in Ethiopia. Egypt feels strongly that the country has vital interests in Ethiopia, and that if Italy breaks faith on religious matters, there can be no assurance that Egypt's water and other rights will be observed.

It has not escaped notice that the action of Italy marks a deviation from her usual policy of courting Arabs and Arab countries.

Respectfully yours,



Leland B. Morris
American Charge d'Affaires a. i.

In triplicate.
file no. 840.4
GPM/icg

Copy to: American Embassy, Rome.



LEGATION OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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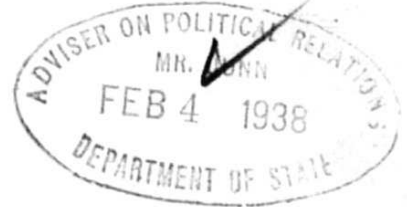
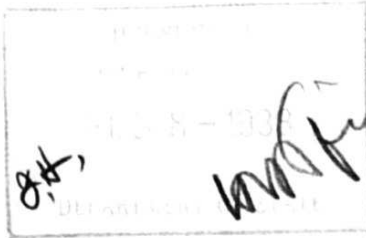
Cairo, January 5, 1938.

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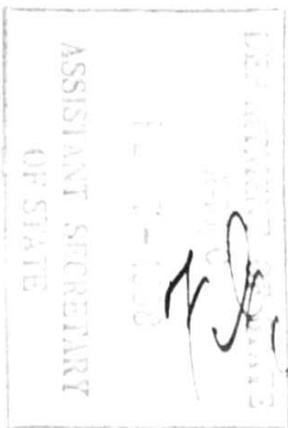
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Subject: Establishment of an Autocephalous
Church in Ethiopia.



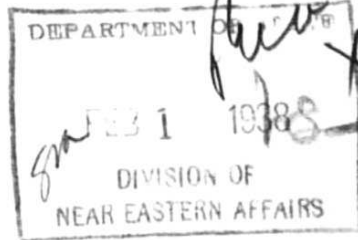
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To the Field
In U. S. A.



The Honorable

The Secretary of State,
Washington.



Sir:

I have the honor to refer to the Legation's
despatch no. 1150 of December 16, 1937 concerning
the establishment of an autocephalous Coptic Church
in Ethiopia.

It became known in Egypt on December 21 that
the protest of the Egyptian Minister at Rome to
the Italian Government against the separation of

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the Ethiopian from the parent Coptic Church was without result, Italy maintaining that its authorities in Ethiopia, responding to the wishes of the population, had taken suitable action to render the Ethiopian Church independent, as, it was asserted, those authorities had the right to do.

Action then passed from the diplomatic to the religious field. At a meeting of the Holy Synod of the Church presided over by the Patriarch Yoannes XIX, the decision was taken to telegraph to Abouna Abraham in Ethiopia, warning him that his action in accepting the title of Patriarch and assuming the leadership of an independent Coptic Church was a breach of his sacred trust and rendered him liable to excommunication. He was summoned to reply to the accusation and given five days within which to reply. No reply having been received within the time limit set, the Holy Synod met on December 28 and pronounced major excommunication against the schismatic Bishop of Ethiopia, against all the bishops and priests ordained by him; and all persons who recognize the new leaders will also be excommunicated.

The text of the decisions taken is enclosed herewith. They have been communicated to the Egyptian Foreign Office which in turn has forwarded them to the Italian Government.

The attitude of the Copts in Egypt on the whole question has been well summarized in an interview granted by a Coptic personality to the Orient Arabe,

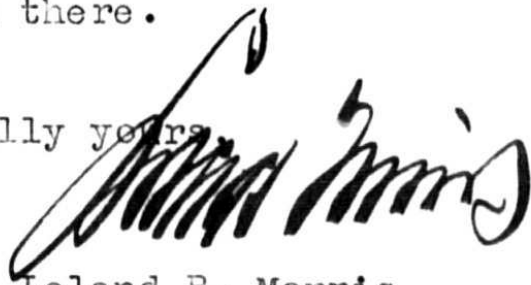
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thus:

"The Church of Ethiopia depends from the Coptic Church of Egypt and the Patriarchal See of Saint Mark not because of the will of the See but through that of the Ethiopians themselves, who are very much attached to the Coptic Church and remain faithful to it. We are now certain that all the news of Italian origin to the effect that the Ethiopians support the new patriarch, is false. The appointment of this patriarch has been greeted in Ethiopian circles by general disapprobation, but these circles have no means of expressing their feelings and their opinions. It is truly regrettable that the Italian authorities should have had recourse to such measures which injure the feelings of the Copts and the rights of their Church, and that they inject themselves into confessional questions of the Ethiopians."

It is reported that Bishop Kyrillos, the regularly constituted head of the Coptic Church in Ethiopia who has been deposed in fact through the action of the Italian authorities, will retain his nominal title and establish himself in the Ethiopian Monastery at Jerusalem, which has remained faithful to the Coptic Church of Egypt, and will carry out his spiritual mission from there.

Respectfully yours,



Leland B. Morris
American Charge d'Affaires a.i.

Copy to:

Embassy, Rome.

Consulate General, Jerusalem.

In triplicate.
File no. 840.4
GPM/hbh

Enclosure:

1 - Text of the Decisions of December 28, 1937.

Enclosure no. 1 to Despatch no. 1165 of
January 5, 1938, from the Legation at Cairo.

Text of the Decisions of the Egyptian
Coptic Orthodox Church taken on December 28, 1937

1. The Church of Ethiopia continues to belong to the Coptic Church, and to be subject to the authority of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Alexandria, the successor of Saint Mark, in conformity with the laws and traditions of the Church.

The Holy Synod refuses to recognize or to accept the action of the Italian authorities concerning the schism of the Church of Ethiopia.

2. The Holy Synod states that the Amba Kyrillos continues to be the Primate of Ethiopia and the head of the Ethiopian Church. At the same time the Holy Synod expresses to the Amba its deep appreciation of his honorable attitude towards the offers made by the Italian authorities, aiming at the separation of the Church, and for his devotion to the supreme power of His Beatitude the Patriarch and to the laws and traditions of the Church.

3. The Holy Synod considers that the excommunication of the Amba Abraham, provision for which is made in the decision of May 31, 1929, has become effective, as a result of his infringement of the above-mentioned decision and the ordination of new bishops in Ethippia. He is consequently declared degraded from all his ecclesiastical ranks and rejected from the Church of Saint Mark and the Ethiopian clergy. There is likewise excommunicated any Christian siding with him, or having dealings with him as a member of the clergy.

4. The Holy Synod declares null the ordination of the bishops effected by the Amba Abraham; there is likewise null any ordination which might be effected by him in the future. All are considered as excommunicated and are rejected from the bosom of the Church for having received their ranks from the hands of a man who has no right to confer them. There is likewise excommunicated any person who might accept any ecclesiastical rank whatsoever from the hands of these excommunicated persons and renegades, as are likewise excommunicated those who may approach or address them as members of the clergy.

5. Any

5. Any person assuming the control of the Church of Ethiopia, whatever be his quality and whatever the religious or civil authority conferring this title upon him, with the exception of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Alexandria, successor of Saint Mark, is excommunicated and rejected from the bosom of the Church, together with every Christian who may side with him or have dealings with him.

6. All the excommunications effected by this decision will remain effective, with all the consequences which will result therefrom. Any solution adopted by any other authority than the Holy Synod is null and void.

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 865d.51/16 FOR #861

FROM Italy (Phillips) DATED Apr.12, 1938
TO NAME 1-1137 GPO

REGARDING: Religious question in Ethiopia.

Statement of the Undersecretary for East Africa concerning Italian policy with respect to -. Visit of the leader of the Ethiopian Moslems to Rome.

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DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 741.65/557 FOR #872

FROM Italy (Phillips) DATED Apr. 21, 1938

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NAME

1-1127

OFF

REGARDING:

Provision of the Anglo-Italian agreements. Italian promises to insure British Nationals in Italian East Africa religious freedom .

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DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 741.65/606 FOR #1294FROM Egypt (Fish) DATED May 21, 1938
TO NAME 1-1127 ...

REGARDING: Religion - Italian East Africa. The Prime Minister's assertion that the question of relations of the Patriarchate with the Coptic Church in Ethiopia were not regarded as settled, but would be taken up with Italy in due course.

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865D.404 / 21

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 741.65/604 FOR Memorandum

FROM State Department (Childs) DATED May 26, 1938.
TO Division of Near NAME 1-1127 ...
Eastern Affairs

REGARDING: Religion - Italian East Africa.

The Anglo-Italian Accord and the provisions thereof relating to the treatment of British religious bodies.

hc

865D.404/ 22

Central File: Decimal File 865D.404, Internal Affairs Of States, Social Matters., Italian East Africa, Religion. Church., June 5, 1936 - May 26, 1938. June 5, 1936 - May 26, 1938. MS European Colonialism in the Early 20th Century. National Archives (United States). Archives Unbound, link.gale.com%2Fapps%2Fdoc%2FSC5109731105%2FGDSC%3Fu%3Domni%26sid%3Dbookmark-GDSC. Accessed 18 June 2025.